

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 18366

FOLG SENT ACTION NEW DELHI DEC 20 RPTD FOR YOUR INFO.
QUOTE.

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRAS 2274

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJECT: KARUNANIDHI ON THE EMERGENCY AND THE DELHI MEETING
OF THE OPPOSITION

REF: NEW DELHI 18242

1. ADDRESSING A PUBLIC MEETING IN MADRAS ORGANIZED TO
COMMEMORATE RAJAJI'S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY, KARUNANIDHI ON
DECEMBER 19 STATED THAT "ALTHOUGH DMK LEADERS WERE NOT
AMONG THOSE WHO WERE AFFECTED IMMEDIATELY WHEN THE
EMERGENCY WAS IMPOSED, THE DMK WAS NONETHELESS THE FIRST
POLITICAL PARTY TO OPPOSE THE IMPOSITION OF THE
EMERGENCY," MAKING ITS OPPOSITION CLEAR AS EARLY AS
JUNE 27, 1975. ACCORDING TO A CONGEN POLITICAL ASSISTANT
WHO WAS PRESENT, KARUNANIDHI MADE IT CLEAR AT THIS POINT
THAT BY "AFFECTED" HE MEANT ARRESTED, AND HE NAMED MANY
OF THE OPPOSITION LEADERS WHO HAD BEEN PICKED UP AND JAILED
ON JUNE 25, 1975. THE DMK LEADER STATED THAT THE DMK
OPPOSITION TO THE EMERGENCY PROVED THAT IT IS NOT A REGIONAL
PARTY BUT IS VERY MUCH CONCERNED WITH THE BROADER
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 18366 211332Z

NATIONAL INTERESTS. FOR EXAMPLE, HE IS REPORTED TO
HAVE SAID, WHEN THE DMK DEMANDS AUTONOMY FOR THE STATES,
THE PARTY DOES NOT CONFINE ITS DEMANDS TO TAMIL NADU
BUT INCLUDES ALL THE STATES OF INDIA.

2. KARUNANIDHI STATED THAT THE DMK HAD OPPOSED THE

EMERGENCY "FROM THE VERY BEGINNING" AND HAS CONTINUED TO DO SO AND THAT WAS WHY THE DMK GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN DISMISSED. IF THE DMK HAD SUPPORTED THE EMERGENCY, HE SAID, HIS GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE OBTAINED "SEVERAL EXTENSIONS OF LIFE" AND MIGHT WELL HAVE LASTED FOR SOME TIME "LIKE THE ACHUTHA MENON MINISTRY OF KERALA." IT WAS APPROPRIATE, HE SAID, THAT THE DMK, "WHICH WAS THE FIRST POLITICAL PARTY TO EXPRESS OPPOSITION TO THE EMERGENCY," HAD INITIATED THE MOVE TO HOLD THE DECEMBER 15 MEETING IN NEW DELHI.

3. CONCERNING THE DELHI MEETING, KARUNANIDHI ASSERTED THAT THE DECEMBER 15 GATHERING "UNDER DMK INITIATIVE" WAS A GREAT SUCCESS AND "NOT A FAILURE AS SOME NEWSPAPERS ARE TRYING TO PRESENT IT." HE CHARACTERIZED THE MEETING AS "A GOOD BEGINNING TO NORMALIZE THE SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY."

4. THE DECEMBER 19 MEETING, ORGANIZED BY THE BHARATHIYA LOK DAL (BLD), WAS HELD INSIDE A HALL, IN CONFORMITY WITH STANDING GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS. IT WAS GIVEN SCANT COVERAGE IN THE PRESS FOREHAND, WITH ONLY MURASOLI AND SUNDAY STANDARD CARRYING NOTICE THAT IT WOULD BE HELD. HOWEVER, THE HALL WAS OVERFLOWING WITH SEVERAL THOUSANDS OUTSIDE. THE BLD FOLLOWING IN THIS AREA IS QUITE SMALL, AND IT WAS QUITE OBVIOUS THAT THE CROWD HAD ASSEMBLED TO HEAR KARUNANIDHI. HE WAS GIVEN A VERY ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION. ACCORDING TO OUR POLITICAL ASSISTANT WHO WAS PRESENT, AND THERE APPEARED TO BE WIDE APPRECIATION FOR WHAT HE SAID. THE MEETING ITSELF WAS NOTED IN BOTH THE HINDU AND THE INDIAN EXPRESS
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PAGE 03 NEW DE 18366 211332Z

OF DECEMBER 20, THOUGH NEITHER PAPER DID OTHER THAN CARRY AN INDICATION THAT KARUNANIDHI HAD PAID TRIBUTE TO RAJAJI.

5. COMMENT: THIS IS THE MOST PROVOCATIVE STATEMENT BY KARUNANIDHI TO COME TO OUR ATTENTION, AND WE CAN NOT HELP BELIEVING THAT HE IS COURTING TROUBLE BY BEING SO OUT-SPOKEN. IT MAY WELL BE THAT HE FEELS MORE CONFIDENT AFTER HIS TRIP TO NEW DELHI FOR THE OPPOSITION MEETING. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT PERMISSION TO HOLD MEETINGS - EVEN INDOOR MEETINGS - IS GRANTED ONLY WITHIN FAIRLY NARROWLY DEFINED LIMITS, AND KARUNANIDHI'S CRITICISM OF THE EMERGENCY WOULD SEEM TO EXCEED THOSE LIMITS. HE DID NOT MENTION THE PRIME MINISTER BY NAME, THOUGH HE CRITICIZED HER INDIRECTLY ONCE OR TWICE DURING HIS SPEECH, AND HIS REFERENCE TO THE DMK'S DESIRE TO "NORMALIZE THE SITUATION" MIGHT BE CONSIDERED A CONCILIATORY NOTE.
MCCASKILL UNQUOTE

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